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CLARK COUNTY
WASHINGTON

BOARD OF CLARK COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Betty Sue Morris • Marc Boldt • Steve Stuart

January 31, 2006

Washington State
House Committee on Local Government
Geoff Simpson, Chair

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

We support annexations. We support annexations that are sensible, orderly, and financially sound. We support, most of all, annexations that are understandable and acceptable to the public, as a means to ensure appropriate city and county services for years to come.

That's why we are asking the Legislature to approve House Bill 3140 and Senate Bill 6825. These bills would clear up a shortcoming in the law that appears to leave the door open for annexations that are not necessarily sound, sensible, and timely.

Quite simply, these bills limit the ability of boundary review boards to expand city annexations to any more than twice the amount of land originally proposed. For years, local jurisdictions assumed that was the limit for both towns and cities. However, a court case involving King County and Redmond raises serious doubts about whether the limit for towns also applies to cities.

We agree that boundary review boards need flexibility to expand or contract annexation proposals, especially to balance land for homes and businesses. Even so, there must be a limit to such changes, so that the final outcome bears a reasonable resemblance to the request submitted for the public boundary review process.

These bills are simple – and sensible – but their impact may be clouded by a difference of opinion between Clark County and the City of Vancouver over how to consider annexation of more than 70,000 people living on more than 16,000 acres.

We agree that most of this area, known generally as Fire District 5, is a likely candidate for annexation at some point within the next few years. A sensible approach would be to have an open and thorough discussion. This discussion should produce agreements to foster effective transitions for citizens and public service providers, before any annexation is approved.

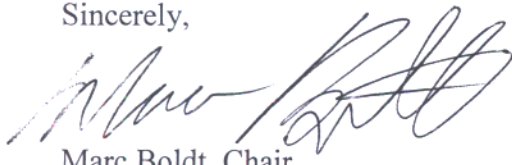
Unfortunately, city officials informed us in December that they were seriously considering using the boundary review board to turn an 800-acre annexation proposal into a 16,000-acre annexation, without taking time to discuss the best way to proceed on behalf of the residents as well as the city and county overall. Despite our differences, we still are hoping to engage the city and the public in such discussions.

House Bill 3140 and Senate Bill 6825 were not introduced in time to have a direct impact on this particular situation. However, they would prevent additional examples of this misguided approach. They would, therefore, allow boundary review boards to function in the sensible manner in which we believe they were intended.

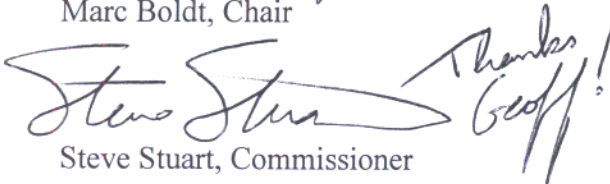
As a matter of public policy, our annexation statutes provide multiple methods to pursue annexation, given considerable public support. Boundary review boards should not be used to avoid the need for public support, but that is a distinct possibility if we do not have legislation to clarify their authority.

Please let us know if we can answer any questions or help in other ways to support orderly annexations.

Sincerely,



Marc Boldt, Chair



Steve Stuart, Commissioner



Betty Sue Morris, Commissioner

c: Clark County Legislators
Vancouver Mayor Royce Pollard
Vancouver City Council
Sharon Wylie